

# NEWS RELEASE

**USDA Forest Service  
Caribou-Targhee National Forest  
1405 Hollipark Drive  
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401**



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Contact: **Lynn Ballard / Mark Orme**  
Phone: **208-524-7500**

## **Forest plan amendment to promote continued recovery of grizzly bear**

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to amend forest plans for six national forests in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) to provide direction for managing grizzly bear habitat, developed sites, and livestock grazing within the Grizzly Bear Recovery Area when the grizzly bear is removed from protection under the Endangered Species Act.

An environmental impact statement (EIS) will analyze the effects of amendments to land and resource management plans for the Beaverhead, Custer, and Gallatin National Forests in Montana; the Targhee National Forest located in Idaho and Wyoming; and the Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests in Wyoming.

The agency expects the draft EIS to be available for public comment in October 2003; the final EIS is planned for completion by February 2004. The Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS was published in the Federal Register July 16.

“The goal of this amendment is to promote the continued recovery of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population,” said Becky Aus, Forest Supervisor of the Shoshone National Forest and chair of the steering team for this amendment.

“We will add several standards to our forest plans. These standards include maintaining secure habitat at 1998 levels through management of motorized access routes, not exceeding the number of commercial livestock allotments and the number of

permitted domestic sheep from the 1998 level, and managing developed sites at 1998 levels.”

All standards apply only to the existing Grizzly Bear Recovery Area.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear population has increased over the past 25 years. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to review the status of the grizzly population for delisting under the Endangered Species Act. Recovery objectives for the grizzly bear were met in 1998.

Federal and state agencies responsible for grizzly bear management in the GYA recently reached agreement on how the grizzly bear population and habitat would be monitored and managed upon recovery and delisting. Habitat and population standards and monitoring protocols were documented in the *Final Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Greater Yellowstone Area (Conservation Strategy)*.

“The purpose of the amendment is to ensure conservation of habitat to support continued recovery of the grizzly bear population,” said Dave Cawrse, team leader for the effort. “It also will update the management and monitoring of grizzly bear habitat to incorporate recommendations from the *Conservation Strategy* and provide consistency among Greater Yellowstone Area national forests in managing grizzly bear habitat.”

The amendments will be implemented when the Record of Decision is signed, when the *Conservation Strategy* is signed by all partner agencies, and when the Final Rule delisting the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is published in the Federal Register. Until then, the *Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines* and current forest plan direction will stay in place.

An extended team of resource specialists will assist with effects analysis and write-ups.

A copy of the *Conservation Strategy* is available on the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/>

[An Internet Web site is available from the IGBC Web site \(use the Web address above and follow the link to the Grizzly Bear Habitat Amendments\).](#)

For more information on the Grizzly Bear Habitat Amendments, telephone Dave Cawrse, IDT Leader at 307.527.6241.

The interdisciplinary team is interested in your comments about the proposal. Comments can be sent by email to [comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone@fs.fed.us), or mailed to Grizzly Bear Habitat Amendments Team, 808 Meadow Lane Avenue, Cody, WY 82414-4549. The 30-day scoping comment period began July 16, 2003. Comments should be received on or before August 15, 2003. The draft EIS is scheduled to be published this fall, with an additional comment period at that time. The final decision will be next spring.

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[www.fs.fed.us/r4/caribou](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/caribou)